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Derailing Anxiety in Academic Library Instruction:

A Study of Teaching Anxiety in Academic Librarians

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What We'll Cover

- What is Teaching Anxiety?
- Why study Teaching Anxiety (TA)?
- Methodology and details of the study
- Results of the study
- Emerging solutions to TA in librarians
- Discussion: your experiences & comments



Teacher Anxiety: Defined?

- 1) conflicting values between teachers & students (Joseph, 1975);
- 2) trepidation with audience interaction (Gardner and Leak, 1994);
- 3) a response rooted in biological disposition, learned behaviors from previous anxiety-inducing occurrences, and exposure to threatening classroom situations (Walton, 1981)



Why this study?

- Librarians have increasingly active teaching roles
 - Move towards IL = more content-based courses (ERIC; 2002)
- TA studies only cover traditional teachers (Coates and Thoresen, 1976; Johns, 1992, etc.)
- What are librarians' TA symptoms? How do librarians cope?



Why this study?



- Effect of internal and external perceptions on TA



Survey Details

- 35-item questionnaire
- Zoomerang Web-based survey tool (www.zoomerang.com)
- Participants requested through ILI-Listserv
- Total of 687 participants; 657 completed surveys; 382 viable responses
- A variety of participants



The Participants: Demographics

- 84% female
- 90% Caucasian
- 35% are between 31-40
- 66% only have the MLS or its equivalent
- All areas of academic librarianship represented



The Participants: Demographics

- 29% working professionally at least ten years
- 59% have faculty status
 - 22% on non-tenure track
- 70% affiliated with 4-year liberal arts colleges and universities



Some Q's, Your A's

- Why did you choose librarianship?
- What is your perception of librarianship?
- How do you think others perceive librarianship?



Career Choice & Perceptions

Librarians are...

- **Content** - **43%** aren't planning a career change (Q14)
- Samaritans – **64%** like helping people (Q11)
- **Unique** – **48%** believe their duties are different from paraprofessionals' (Q12)



Career Choice & Perceptions

Librarians are...

- **Annoyed** – **38%** are a bit bothered by stereotypes (Q15)
 - **Concerned** – **46%** agreed that teaching faculty don't understand librarians' teaching roles (Q13)
 - **Put-off** – **35%** have defended their teaching roles to other librarians (Q16)
-



Teaching & Instruction

Librarians...

- Love to teach – **74%** enjoy teaching (Q20)
 - Why? Course material is important; they feel prepared.



Teaching & Instruction

On the other hand (just the pinky, though)...

- Not so much – **26%** don't enjoy teaching
 - Why not? Concerns about how to engage students; dislike of public speaking.



Teaching & Instruction

Librarians...

- Are limited – **58%** don't teach full-semester or quarter courses (Q19)
- Are busy – **43%** teach BI sessions 15 or more times per semester or quarter (Q18)



Some Q's, Your A's

- How do you feel when preparing for a class? While teaching?
- If you experience anxiety, how do you cope?
- How do you think your teaching faculty perceive librarianship?



Teaching Anxiety: Symptoms

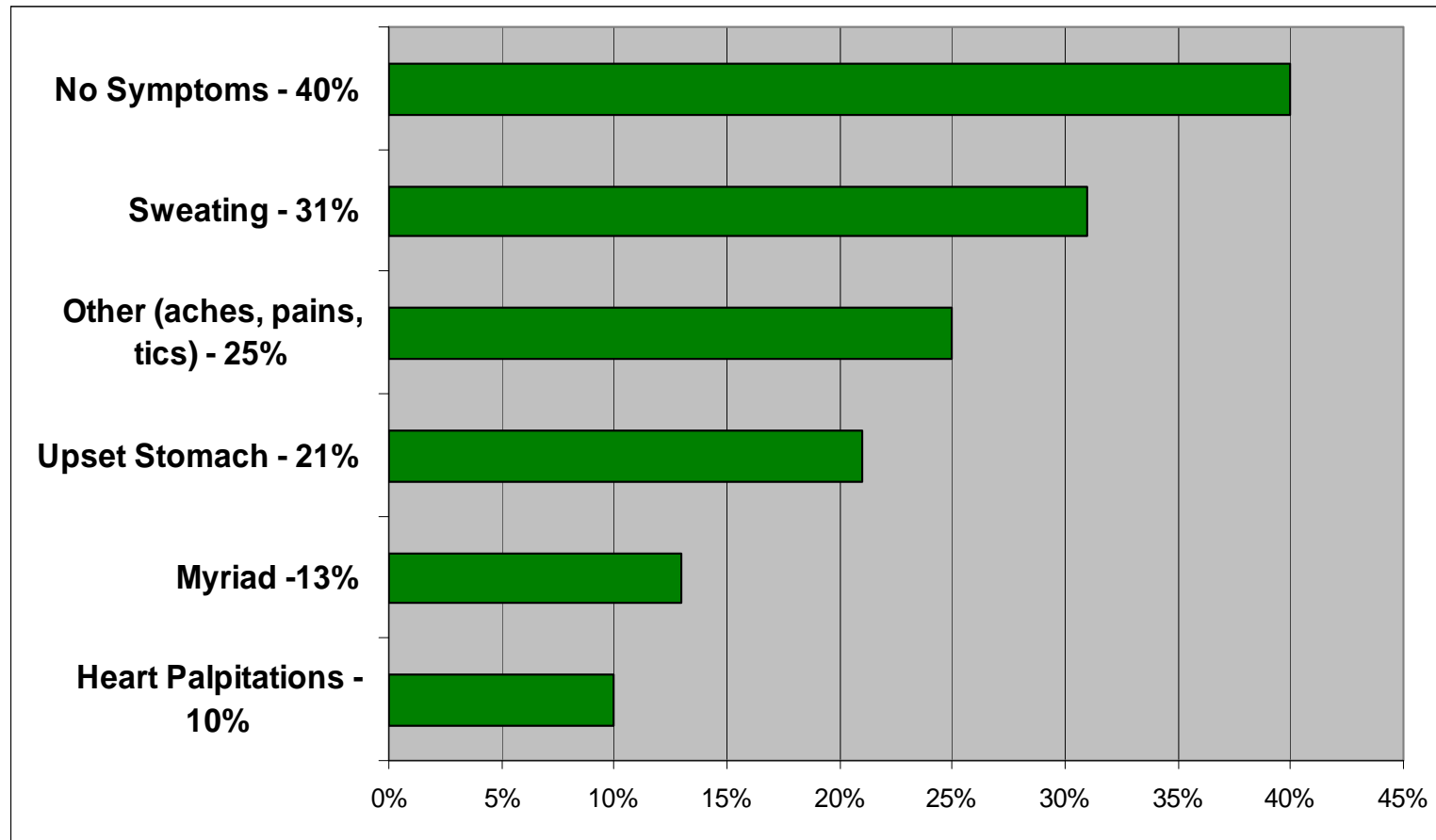
Generally:

- 63% are nervous before teaching (Q23)
- 37% reported a decrease in anxiety while teaching (Q25)
- 54% reported complete dissipation of symptoms after teaching (Q26)



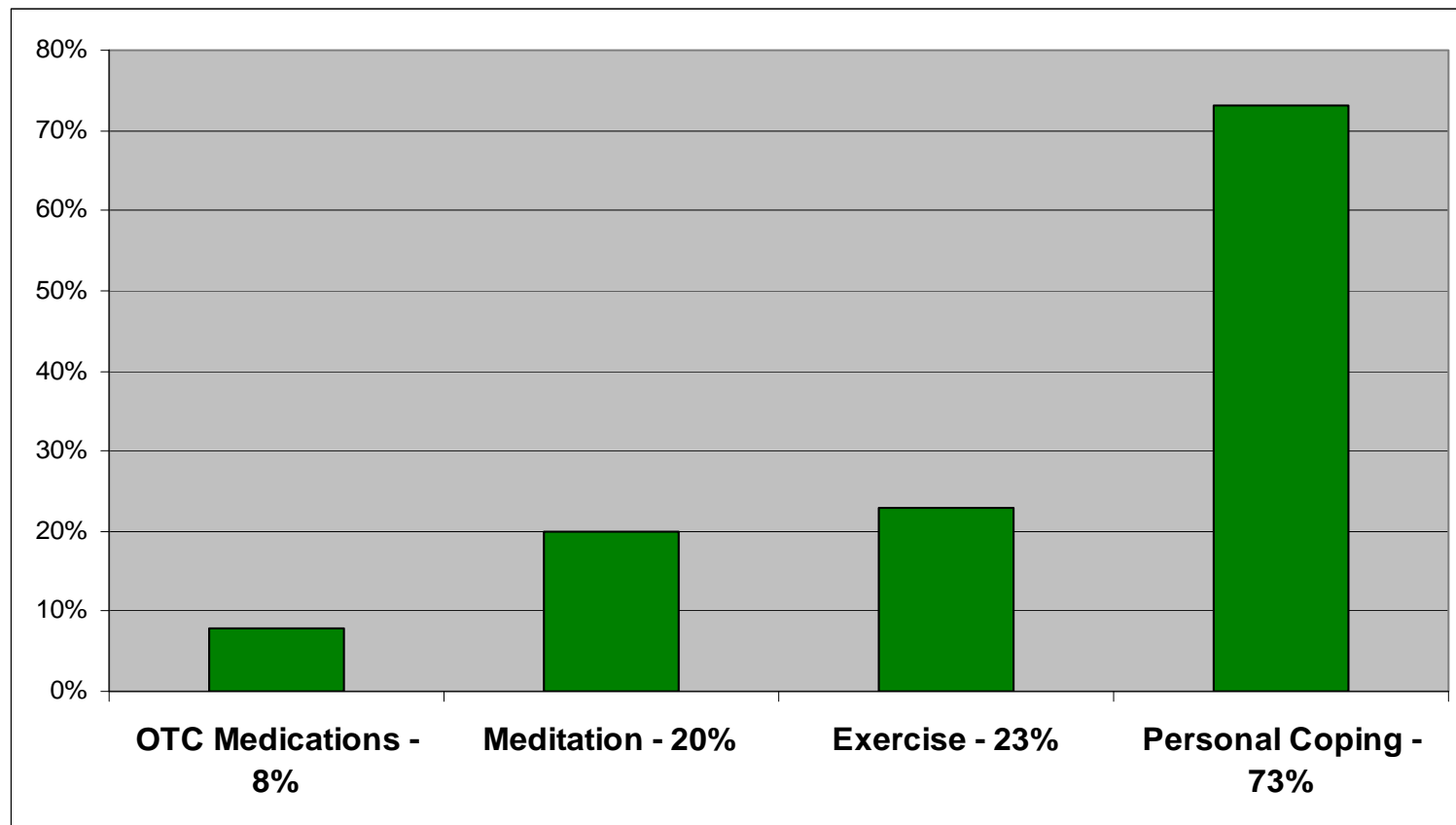
Teaching Anxiety: Physical Symptoms

60% experienced a combination of symptoms





Teaching Anxiety: Coping with Physical Symptoms





Occurrence of Physical Symptoms

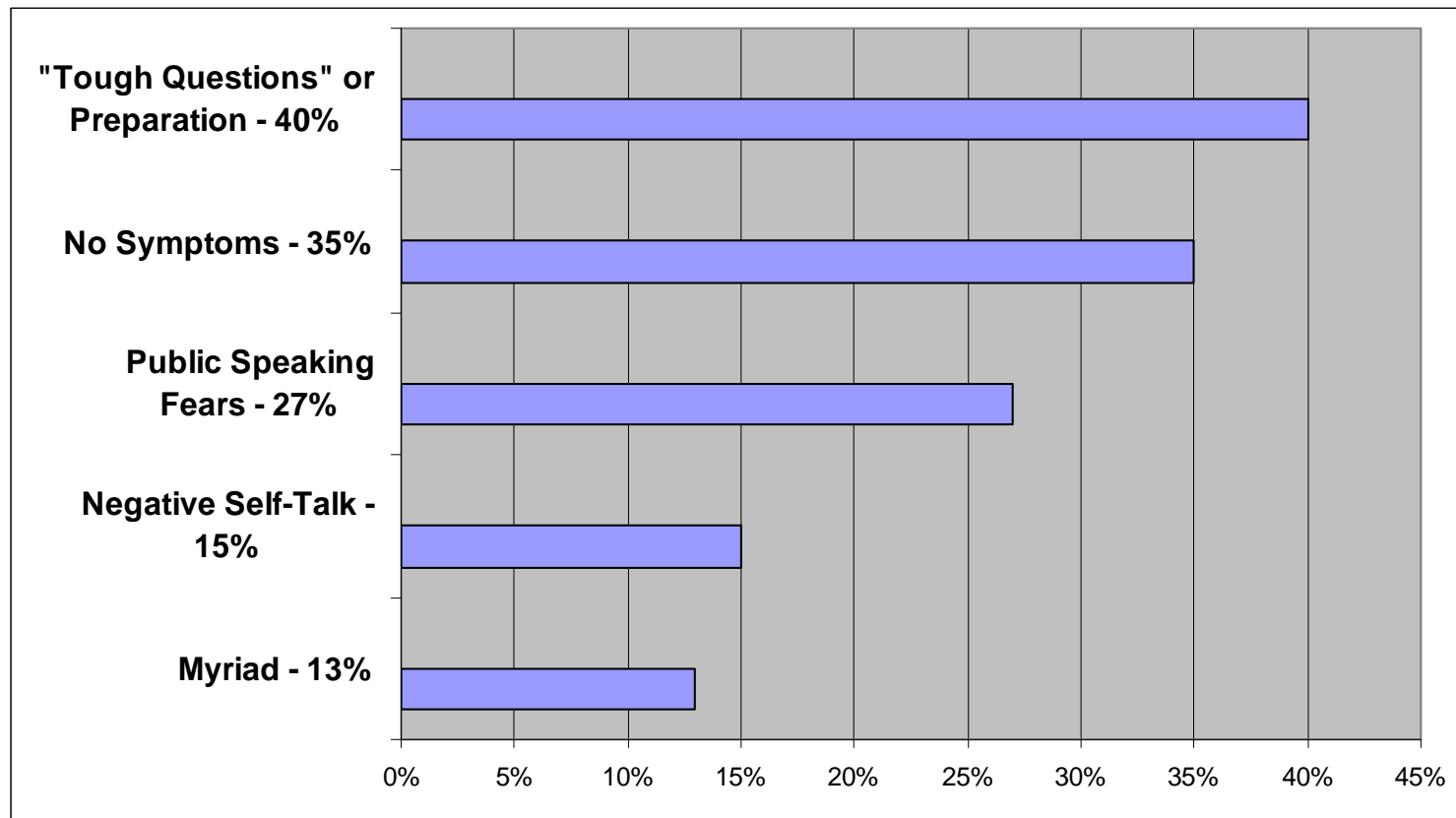
- 7% report **always** having symptoms
- 20% report **often** having symptoms
- 22% report **sometimes** having symptoms
- 10% report **rarely** having symptoms



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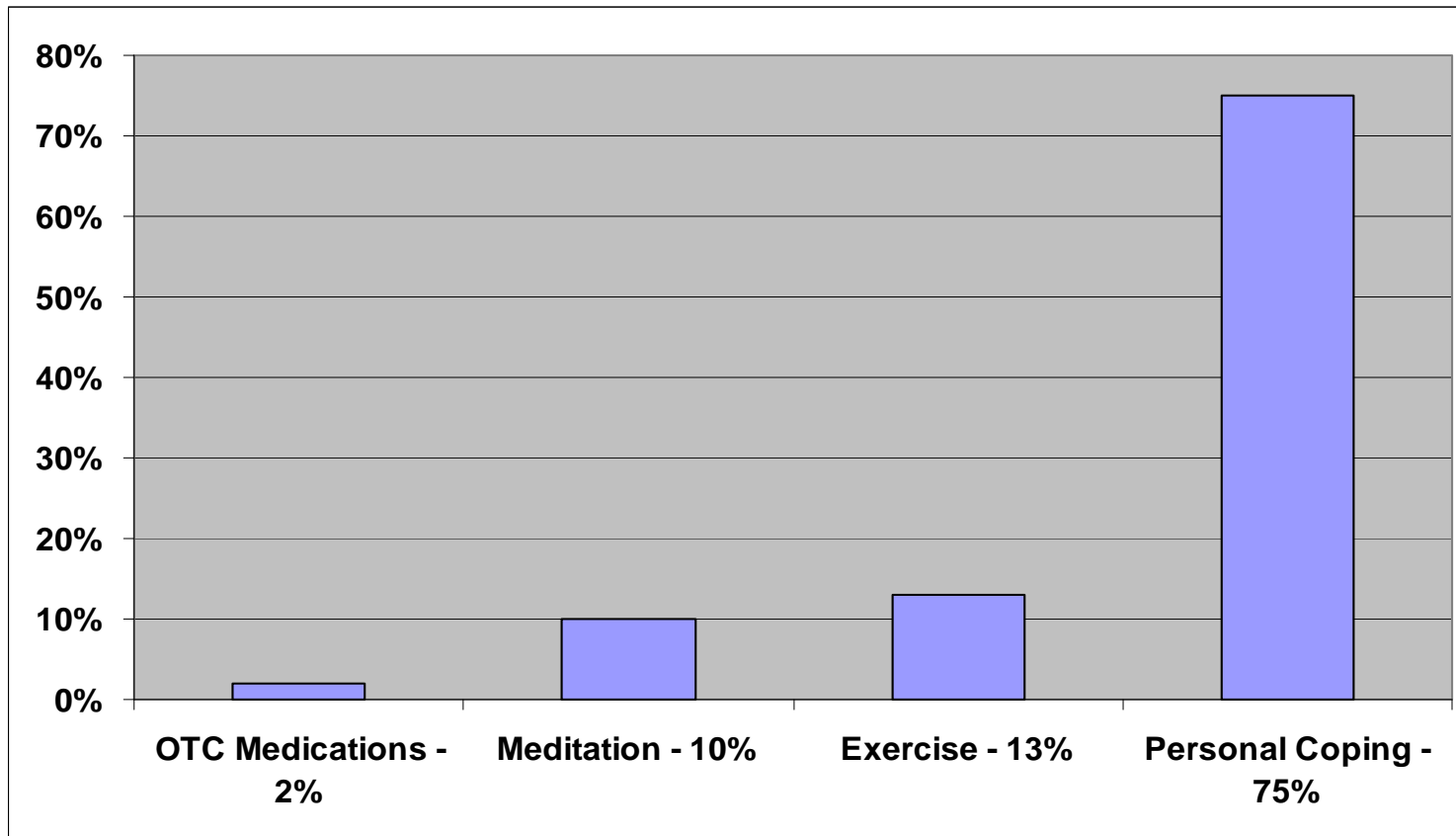
Teaching Anxiety: Mental/Emotional Symptoms

65% experienced a combination of symptoms





Teaching Anxiety: Coping with Mental/Emotional Symptoms





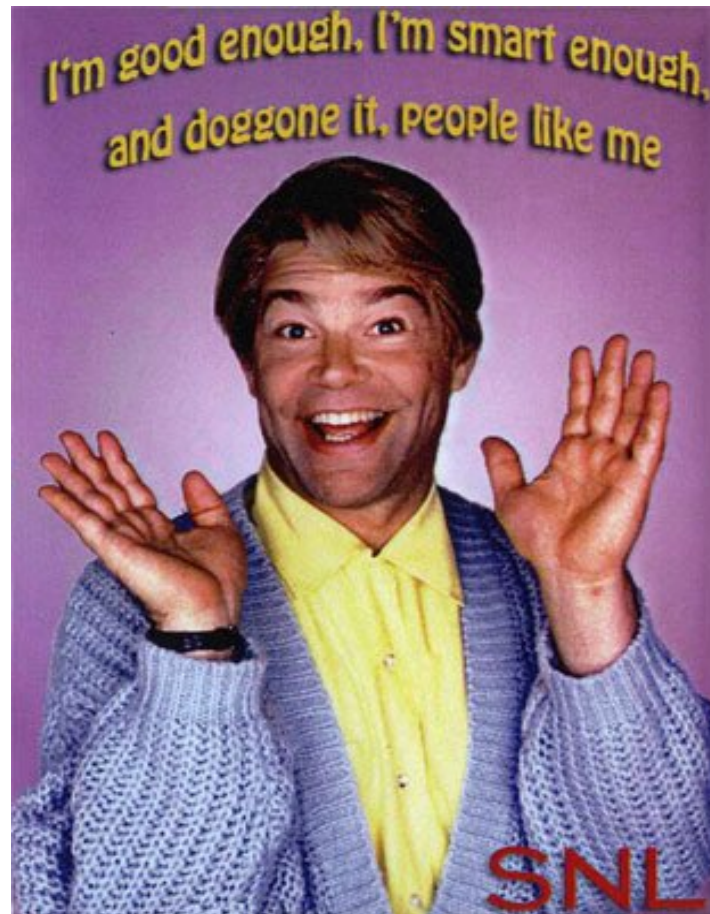
Occurrence of Mental/Emotional Symptoms

- 12% report **always** having symptoms
- 18% report **often** having symptoms
- 27% report **sometimes** having symptoms
- 8% report **rarely** having symptoms



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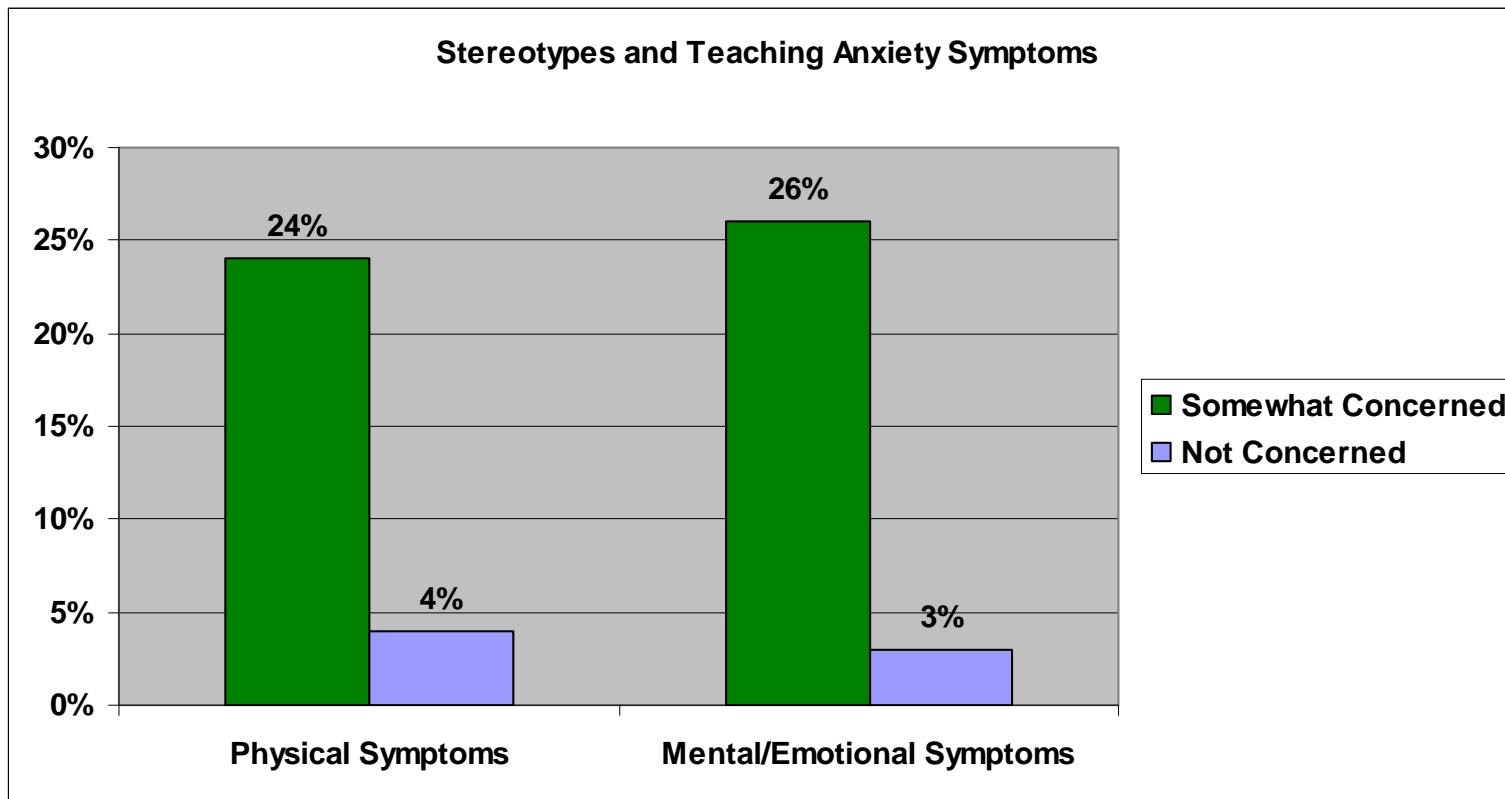
Help from Stuart Smalley...





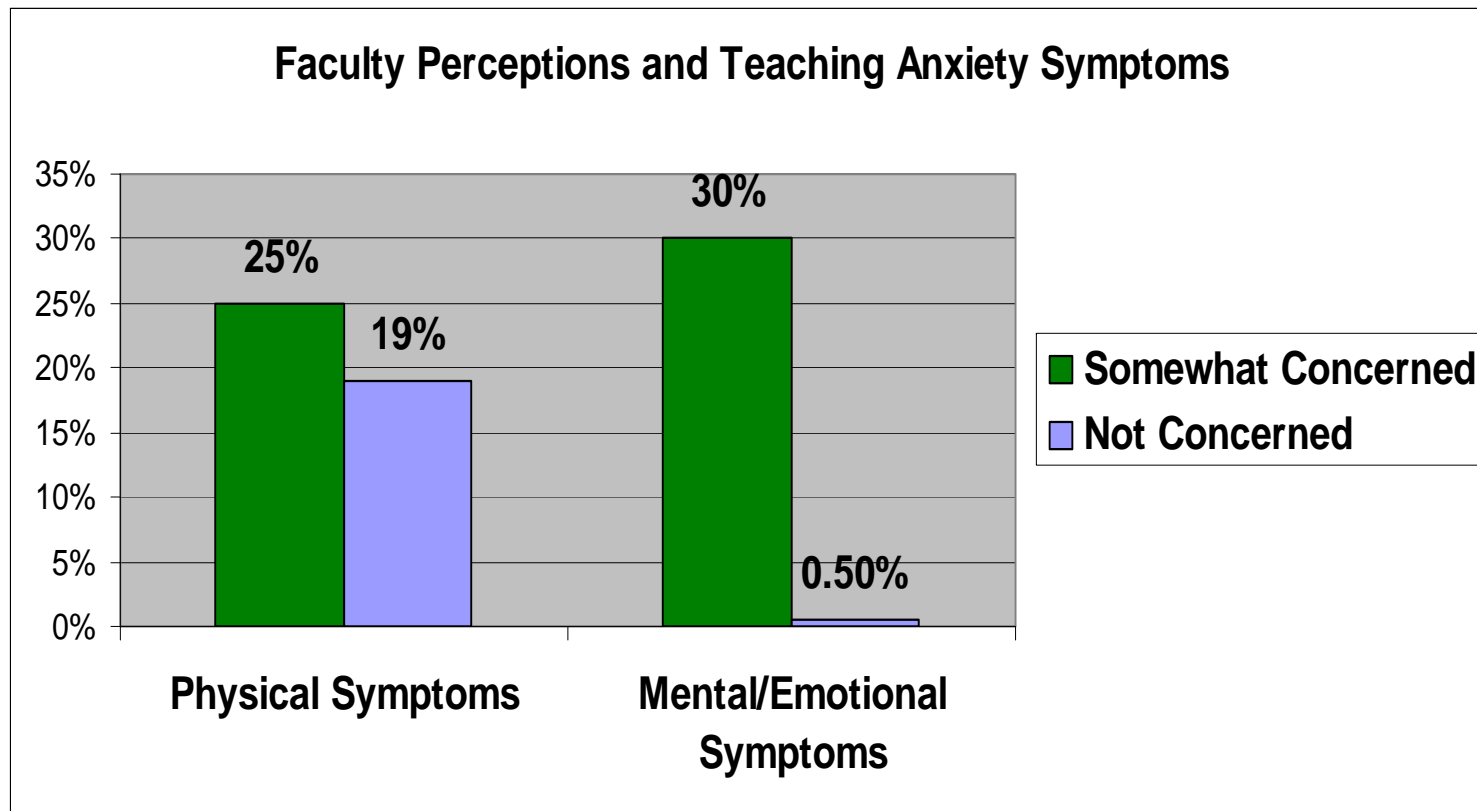
The study also shows...

- 1) Stereotype concerns heighten TA symptoms



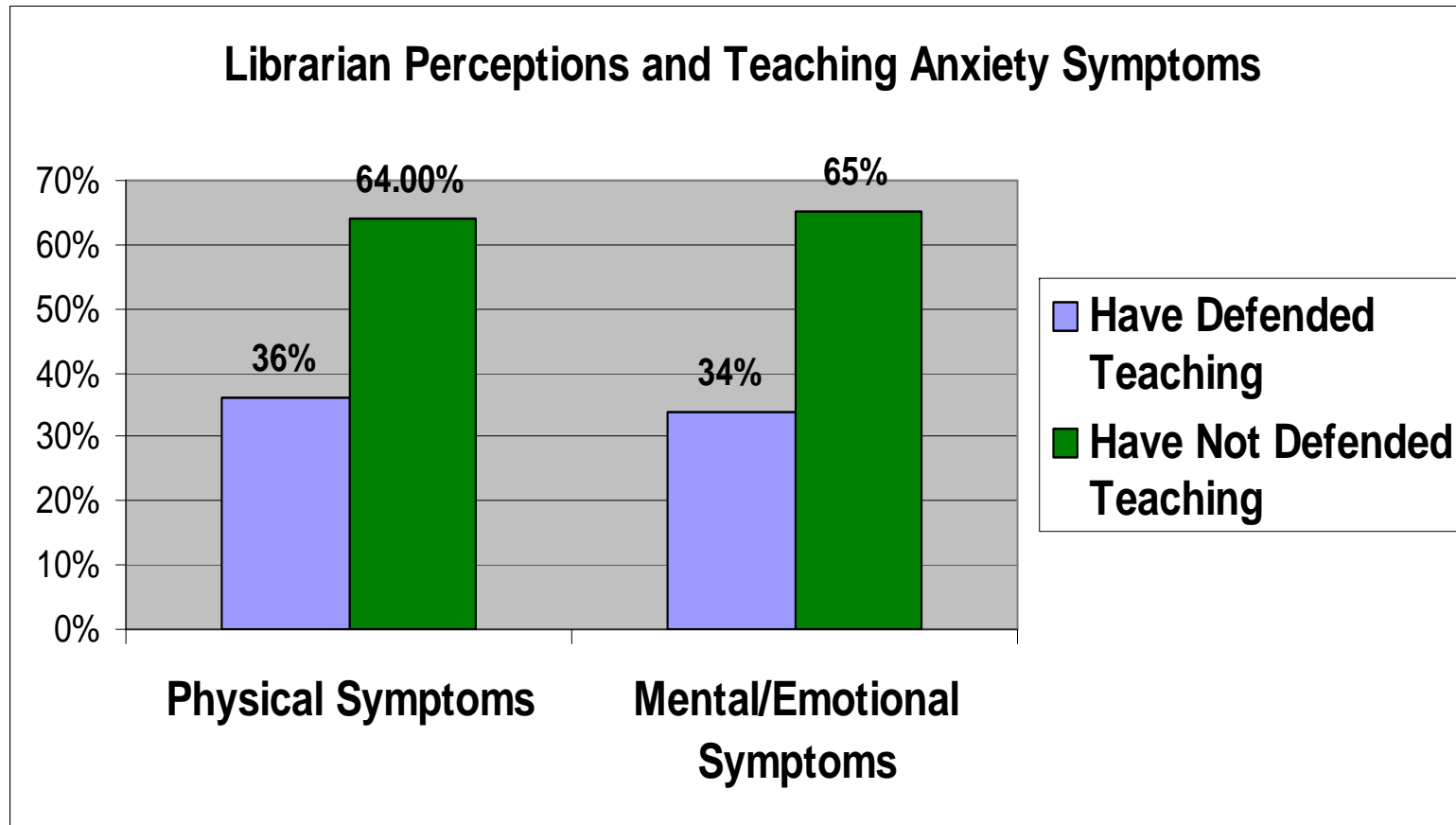


- 2) Faculty perception concerns heighten TA symptoms





- 3) Librarian perceptions have no effect on TA symptoms





- 4) Career length does not affect TA experiences
 - New and experienced librarians have mental/emotional symptoms.
 - New librarians more likely to experience physical symptoms.
 - Seasoned librarians more likely to experience mental/emotional symptoms.





Other issues considered in this study...

- Specific causes of teacher anxiety at the collegiate level (Showalter, 2003)
- Librarians: teaching vs. informing
- Tenure and academic librarians (ACRL, 2001; Hill, 2005)



Teach with Confidence...

- Consider ACRL's Institute for Information Literacy (Immersion program)
- Browse these Web sites:
 - ACRL's Instruction Section
 - Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT)
 - Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX)
- Share your experiences, techniques, and lesson plans with other professionals via employee meetings, wikis, blogs, etc.



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Teach with Confidence...

Advocate librarianship!





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Questions?

Your comments are appreciated.



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